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SUBJECT: Frustration in Comoros Over Unpaid Teacher Salaries

REF: A) ANTANANARIVO 1309 B) ANTANANARIVO 1307

[1](#)1. (U) Frustrated Comoran teachers who are owed more than four months of back salaries recently marched in Moroni, demanding to be paid before returning to the classroom. Union President Sambi and Grand Comore Island President El-Bak met with teachers' representatives to seek a compromise. At the same time, the Union and three island finance ministers met to find a solution to the education financing shortfall. Chaban Mohamed, Secretary General of the teacher's union, said teachers would not return to work until paid at least two months' salary.

[1](#)2. (U) Unconfirmed media reports indicate the European Union has offered to pay the teachers four months of their salary. During a November 27 stop in Comoros, French Minister of Cooperation Girardin announced an 88 million euro aid package for the country; some of which would presumably keep schools open.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Despite the fact that France is the first and only country to honor its commitments from the Comoros donor's conference one year ago in Port Louis, Minister Girardin's 88 million euro aid deal was met with suspicion in Comoros. True to inter-island squabbling form, critics argued about which of the three islands would receive the most aid. Island President El-Bak reportedly felt snubbed the French Minister did not meet him. And rumors abound that France is only really interested in preventing illegal immigration from Comoros to its nearby territory of Mayotte.

[1](#)4. (SBU) COMMENT: Six months into his term, President Sambi still has not delivered on one of his top campaign promises to pay teachers' salaries so that schools can stay open. Amid reports that Saudi Arabia and Iran have delivered millions in aid, in addition to the EU, France and a small U.S. program, Sambi's failure starts to appear less a matter of finance and more one of competence. Elected in a freely democratic landslide victory, Sambi's honeymoon is waning and long suffering Comorans want results. END COMMENT.

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